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## THE SONS OF MALTA.

Recollections of a Secret Order That Forced Good Men to "Give Themselves Away."

Just a quarter of a century ago a secret society, known as the Sons of Malta, sprang suddenly into existence in the city of New Orleans. The original object of the organization was the capture of Cuba, and many prominent military men of the South were the leading spirits in the movement. For reasons which the writer is not at liberty to divulge, the filibustering plans of the Order were abruptly squelched, and soon thereafter a well-known newspaper-man, who had been initiated, conceived the idea of making "some fun for the boys." The whole business of initiation, etc., was transformed into a series of the most stupendous sells, practical jokes and outrageously comical proceedings ever dreamed of. The Order spread rapidly all over the Union. It was generally believed by the outside public that the Sons of Malta was a benevolent society, and to foster this belief frequent lengthy notices of charitable deeds performed by the Order were published in the newspapers all over the land. Meetings were held weekly, and there was so much solid fun to be enjoyed that nothing short of a death in the family would deter a member from attending; therefore, in many places, the membership was so great that the utmost difficulty was experienced in obtaining lodge rooms of sufficient capacity.

Candidates for initiation were ushered into the hall where those who were already members were arranged in rows, each covered from head to foot with a white or black gown, in which was cut small holes for the eyes and mouth. With this garment on the identity of the wearer was perfectly concealed and the candidates who were initiated at one time did not know whether they were in the hands of friends or strangers.

To each candidate the "Master of Ceremonies" in a most impressive and pleasing manner, stated the objects of the Order and told how the brotherhood came together with one aim and one understanding. "We are bound together," he said, "by the ties of love, confidence and charity for one another, strengthened and solidified by the cement of confession. We open up the secrets of our hearts in the hearing and presence of each other. We are all sinful creatures and confession is good for the soul. Our good deeds speak for themselves, and our bad deeds are recorded, and in due time these records are burned and the ashes are all that remain of a dead and forgotten past."

Then the candidate was asked if he was willing to leave the sinful world behind, and enter upon the new life. An affirmative answer, and the initiation began. He was immediately blindfolded, led to a step-ladder, and told to ascend and seat himself on the top stair with arms folded. This was the position each had to occupy while undergoing the ordeal of a "confession" of his misdeeds. He would be led along by adroit questioning until he made what was regarded as a "clean breast" of his moral shortcomings. When a particularly rich or unexpected admission was pumped out of him, a dead, sepulchral voice solemnly exclaimed:

"Re-c-o-r-d it."

And immediately a heavy blow was struck upon a big drum to drown the irrepressible laughter.

If a candidate gave evidence of a desire to conceal anything, he was given to understand that the inner secrets of his soul were known to the Order, and to hesitate in giving them would be an unpardonable crime in the eyes of the brotherhood. This would suffice for many, but the majority would, of course, hold out and refuse to answer some indelicate question, liable to lead into a channel that might involve him in

a disagreeable confession. And all through this was exactly what was aimed at.

In such cases an intimate friend of the candidates would pass up to the Master of Ceremonies on a slip of paper a point or two in some questionable transaction of the applicant's life, and this would prove the key to unlock the secret recesses of his heart. Then would the master say, in a tone of rebuke:

"The records of the Order show that upon such a day, in such a year, while you were in the city of Cincinnati you did thus and so." Then in a tone mildly expostulatory he continued:

"My friend—would I could call you brother—as I have said before, all your misdeeds are known to the Order to which you are seeking admission. While crossing the portals which separate our brotherhood from a wicked and sinful world, and while about entering upon a new life, and breathing a purer atmosphere, you have ungratefully tried to deceive us. For this you are to be punished and thrust back into the wickedness you are so loath to leave behind."

"Sir Knight, summon the Council of Ten and take the recreant before that tribunal for punishment."

Then to the candidate, in a saddened tone of voice:

"Sir, there is but one way in which you can redeem yourself in the eyes of the brotherhood—make a full and complete confession."

The feeling that their secrets might actually be in possession of the brotherhood, and an indefinable dread of what that council of ten might do in the way of punishment, invariably unlocked the mouth, and some of the most sedate citizens—men of good character and standing—were forced to own up to more transgressions than they would care to have put in print.

The candidate was then asked if he could swim. If he answered in the affirmative the reply was: "Let us see you. If in the negative the answer was: 'We will teach you.' Still blindfolded, he was marched to a far corner of the room where a stream of water from a faucet kept up the delusion of a prospective bath and commanded to disrobe for the plunge. Four strong brothers then seized him, and with a toss placed him with his stomach resting on the top of a high stool and told him to "strike out." The delusion was so great that the poor victim would kick and paw the air, and make the most ridiculous exertions imaginable.

Although it was a dry bath, the new-fledged brother had to be put through the drying-machine. This was a high, narrow box—just high enough and wide enough for a man to stand upright in. When he was in there slats were inserted to keep him in position while he was going through the drying process. The box was hung on pivots between two upright bars, and had attached to the side a crank, by which it could be readily and quite rapidly revolved. And this was only one of the little trials which the ambitious seeker after the mysteries of Malta had to undergo. He was whirled round and round perpendicularly, head over heels and heels over head, first quite slow and then with gradually increasing speed, until the breath of the human propeller gave out. The frightened fellow was then removed to an easy chair to take a rest, while further questions were propounded to him, and the sonorous "Re-c-o-r-d it!" resounded throughout the hall after each of his answers. He was then told to prepare for the "rough and rugged road." He was then placed on all fours, and, by prodding from the rear, forced to crawl through a long iron boiler on which the men were hammering; thence upon a rough incline to the top of a pedestal twelve or fifteen feet high, from which he

was shoved into a large blanket made of sail-cloth, with hand-holes for ten men on a side. Then he was sent flying to the ceiling. Down he would come and up he would go at the rate of thirty times in sixty seconds, and such a shaking up as the poor fellow experienced can not be realized by those who have not been similarly favored.

And thus the "initiation" continued until the resources of the lodge were exhausted, one grand sell following another in rapid succession, each one more stupendous than the one preceding. Finally, as a grand wind-up, the candidate was informed that in view of the fact that he had suffered so many indignities and passed through such a trying ordeal, the lodge had decided to confer upon him the honorary title of G. R. J. A.—Judge, or Colonel, or General So-and-so having resigned the position in his favor.

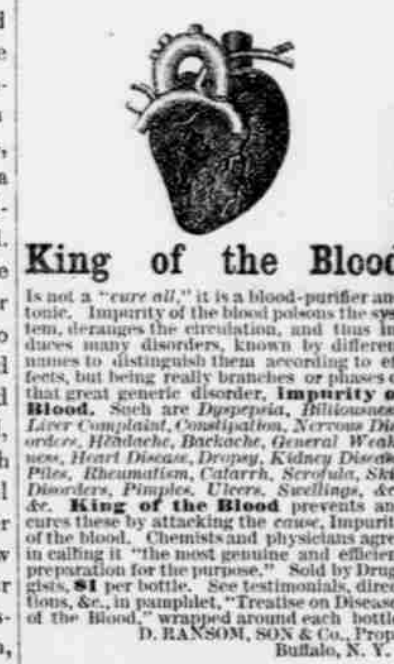
With a lengthy and florid speech from the master of ceremonies, and a deal of adulation and mock tokens of respect from the now unmasked members of the Order, the candidate was presented with his credentials, which it was made obligatory upon him should be immediately opened and examined. Hastily the "great seal" of the Order would be broken, the certificate taken from the envelope and opened, and the victim would discover the picture of a jackass in bold relief, with various accoutrements and accomplishments, and would pocket his credentials and his chagrin amid the roars of the frolicsome gang that surrounded him.

This expose could be greatly extended, but enough has been given to let those in Louisville, who were members of the "noble Order," know that one of the G. R. J. A.'s has been "giving away" their cussedness. — Louisville Courier-Journal.



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**SYMPTOMS OF A DISEASED LIVER.**  
Pain in the right side, under edge of ribs, increasing on pressure; sometimes the pain is on the left side; the patient is rarely able to lie on the left side; sometimes the pain is felt under the shoulder and is sometimes taken for Rheumatism in the arm. The stomach is affected with loss of appetite and sickness; the bowels in general are constive, sometimes alternating with laxity; the head is troubled with pain, accompanied with a dull, heavy sensation in the back part. There is generally a considerable loss of memory, accompanied with a painful sensation of having left undone something which ought to have been done. A slight dry cough is sometimes attendant. The patient complains of weakness and debility; he is easily startled; his feet are cold or burning, and he complains of a prickly sensation of the skin; his spirits are low, and although he is satisfied that exercise would be beneficial to him, yet he can scarcely summon up fortitude enough to try it.

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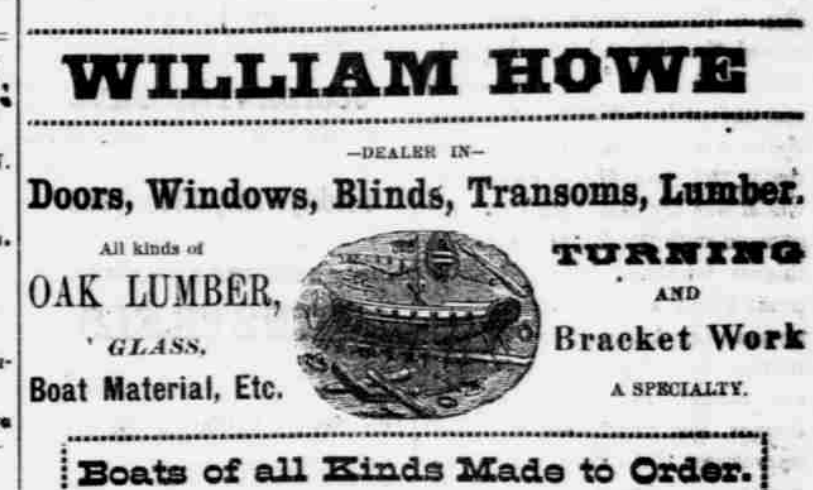
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